

Unmade Road

Julio Jose Austria

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Art Verite Gallery

Unfolding Journey

By: Lisa Ito

Over the years, Julio Jose Austria has embarked on different sojourns: from the Philippines to various countries as a young painter, and from Manila to the United States on various art scholarships.

After completing a succession of art residency programs in New York, Vermont and Michigan since 2009, Austria now shares to the public chronicles and reflections from these various journeys in *Unmade Road*, his latest one-man show at the Art Verite gallery in Manila.

Unmade Road is a collection of visual stories, culled from the different places he has visited and observations he has noted along the way. The show is comprised of 12 paintings in oil on canvas, depicting recollections of scapes and subjects caught in transit: subway scenes and unknown alleys, the lure of diaspora to faraway lands, the apprehension prior to departing for the unknown.

Merging both abstraction and figurative elements, the works capture the variety of experiences one would come across in the course of a journey: uncertainty over one's destination, the simultaneous ordeal and adventure to complete the trip, the mixture of self-reliance and good fortune, the temptation to wallow in what is temporary.

But while Austria's subjects tread into the unfamiliar and oftentimes sordid

ground of diaspora, they also try to represent a sort of moral compass. The artist also strives to find solace and strength in his representations of quiet valor: in the tales of the country's numerous unsung heroes working for a common good and in the little tests of character that one faces daily.

Austria's work strives to incorporate symbols and themes underscoring redemption and persistence in the everyday, within the larger journey of life. References to finding one's way around populate Austria's paintings – markers for the directions that the artist wishes to point out to to chart one's way across a consumerist-driven world, where survival of the fittest is the norm and where not all choose to take the road less travelled.

Unmade Road is far from being a finished story. As an unfolding narrative of lessons, the show reflects not just on the phenomenon of journeying and diaspora but also on human values and the lessons such experiences can convey. Austria considers life as an unending journey—a road still to be paved. It is in these unfinished spaces that the possibility of charting more dreams and working towards redemption becomes real.

About the artist

Jojo Austria (Julio Jose Austria) recently completed several arts residencies in the United States under various scholarships: at the Vytlacil Campus of the Art Students League of New York (2011-2012), Oxbow School of the Arts in Michigan (2010) and the Vermont Studio Center (2009) in addition to participating in regular group exhibitions.

Austria was among the finalists in last year's Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Art Competition and in the 2008 Art Association of the Philippines annual art competition. Prior to these, he also participated in the Metrobank Young Painters Annual Art Competition and the Shell National Student Art Competition. Austria

earned his degree in Fine Arts, major in Painting, at the University of Santo Tomas.

Austria held his first solo show, entitled *Urban Jungle*, at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in 2005 and has since then held one-man exhibits of his work in Manila and Davao, Thailand, Germany and Austria. *Unmade Road* is his 8th one-man show. ###